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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VIENTIANE 000396

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL/IRF, PRM

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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [TH](#) [LA](#)

SUBJECT: LAO GOVERNMENT REPORT ON INTERVIEW WITH 22 HMONG
DEPORTEES SHOWS A RELIGIOUS ANGLE

REF: VIENTIANE 321 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia M. Haslach, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) Embassy has come by a copy of a Lao government report on the interrogation of 22 female members of the group of 27 Hmong deported from Thailand in December. Because of its style and content, we believe the document to be authentic. The hand-written report provides brief biographical background on the 22 and then analyzes events leading to their entry into Laos. Compiled by police in Bolikhamsai province, where the group was first detained by Lao authorities, the document discloses GoL paranoia about the 22, seeing their Christian religion and their receipt of aid from foreign organizations as signals that they were perhaps agents provocateur sent to create problems. It establishes credibly that the Lao have the children in detention, have known about them all along, and see them as a security threat, as we have surmised. It also reveals a previously unknown religious element to their arrest and detention, further complicating the case. We have provided a copy of the report to Embassy Bangkok. Besides offering a revealing insight into GoL thinking, it may be helpful in establishing the GoL's complete lack of candor on its detention of the group. End summary.

Contents of report

2. (C) The photocopied report was passed to us by a Hmong contact in Laos, who in turn had obtained it from other Hmong. Our contact said it came from sympathetic Hmong in the Bolikhamsai government. Titled "Report on the investigation of the 22 Hmong people who entered Laos from Thailand," it states that it is the result of the investigation made by Bolikhamsai provincial police assigned since December 12, 2005 to looking into the case of the 22 Hmong females. It begins with a lengthy section detailing the names, ages, names of parents and siblings, places of birth and residence, dates of entry to Thailand from Laos, religion and ethnicity of each of the 22 female members of the group of 27 Hmong deported to Laos from Thailand on December 5. The information contained is consistent with that provide by other sources regarding the group.

3. (C) The second part of the document is entitled the "activities" section, and details the movement of the girls from the time they fled to Thailand. From this point the document is quoted as translated:

"Activities section

Since 2004, the group received news from Radio Free Asia that there was a plan to take in Hmong who had fled Laos from Tham Krabok, Khet Noy in Tak province and Houay Nam Khao in Petchaboon province (Thailand) in order to establish a place for political refugees from the U.S. This caused the Hmong in many areas to flee from Laos to reside in Thailand. When they arrived in Thailand, the group engaged in the following activities:

- Studied Thai and English from an American teacher.
- Every Saturday and Sunday they listened to religious proselytizing from America.
- They received assistance, including a quantity of materials such as tools and food, which was direct assistance from America that was turned over to the Thai to distribute.
- In their free time, they engaged in itinerant work to make some money, along with Thai Hmong from the provinces. They also visited relatives. But every Saturday and Sunday, they had to return to listen to the religious proselytizing.
- Sometimes Thai Hmong relatives came to pick them up to visit, or they went on vacation with other Hmong who shared their religion. They went to help build Hmong villages in Tak province, which was divided into meeting areas called "Ban 1," "Ban 2," up to 39, which they claimed were areas designated for the Hmong to live.

In summary, the 27 Hmong, 22 of whom were females, were at Nam Khao center. 25 persons were at Ban Khem Noy and one person left to travel. Whether visiting relatives or doing itinerant work, each time they went together.

Observation and evaluation:

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¶1. The aforementioned Hmong individuals may have been given education and training, indoctrinated, given funds and were led along a path.

¶2. They have gone back and forth many times already and have been subjected to propaganda from relatives abroad. They were encouraged to develop a list of people for interview to go to America.

¶3. When the aforementioned individuals arrived at Nam Khao (Petchaboon province, Thailand), they may have received training and documents that are counter to Lao PDR policy, which is revealed by the fact that these Hmong received money to study Thai, English, the origins of the Christian religion and the characteristics of the religion as it pertains to their ethnic group. To help spread the religion, when there were sick or injured people who had no resources for treatment, that family would have to join the Christian church or they would not receive assistance.

When they were detained at Khao Kho in Petchaboon province on November 28, 2005 to December 5, 2005, there were many Hmong held together who cried loudly. The Thai police asked them why they were crying. The Thai police gave Christian bibles to them, and told them that if they read about Jesus they would receive blessings.

¶4. The aforementioned may have received training and been given the assignment to work in the Lao PDR, and to establish themselves in small groups of friends. Those Hmong all denied any knowledge of Houay Nam Khao, all said their parents were deceased, did not reveal their home village or relatives' names, and claimed they could not speak Lao and did not know how to respond.

In carrying out Step 2 investigation, we were able to gather external evidence plus discrepancies in the Hmong testimony, which indicates that there was one Thai Hmong in the group:

- Parents living in Thailand -- 14 individuals
- Parents deceased - 2 individuals

Parents in Laos - 5 individuals

¶5. The aforementioned may have been tasked by the refugees in Thailand to come to Laos and work for a short period. This was evidenced by the fact that they had only the clothes they wore, and no funds, and they all had the same kind of clothes.

Based on their testimony, they said that (Thai) officials accused them of being Lao who entered the country illegally. But when relatives came to post bond for them in Thailand, none of them went back to Nam Khao center.

As for Ms. Cha Thao, she is a Thai Hmong from Ban Nam Chua, Amphoe Khao Kho, Petchaboon province. Many of them tried to cover that up by saying she was a Lao Hmong, born in Ban Nonhai, Muang Feuang, Vientiane province.

After investigation by officials, Ms. Cha Thao admitted she was in fact a Thai Hmong, from Ban Nam Choua, Amphoe Khao Kho, but when Thai officials arrested them and an aunt of this person came to post bail for her, she refused to go home, and said she would go with her friends.

Based on testimony by Ms. Pakou Vang (Mai Vang), she knows many places, including temples, churches in various provinces, starting in Vientiane. She admitted knowing about Mr. Somphon, who went to study in Australia and came back to Laos to be a priest at Ban Kengsadok, Paksan district, Bolikhamsai province. Many times Ms. Pakou Vang told officials that if she was released she would get them money. If they wanted 200,000 baht, she could get it in one day in Vientiane. If they wanted 100,000 US dollars, it would take seven days to obtain.

¶6. Based on the reality at present, there is an American who is searching for these Hmong in Bolikhamsai. This is the fifth time. And Radio Free Asia has announced that 27 Hmong crossed from Thailand, including 22 females, and is asking where the Lao officials have taken them.

Solution:

- Based on the evidence obtained from the investigation, note that it is proper and passed the review of the experts. Besides, there are still some elements that should be the subject of continued investigation. Therefore, our experts

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believe the solution is as follows:

Propose to higher levels that they research and resolve as quickly as possible

¶1. Research the option to push them to return to their country.

¶2. Research the option for long-term reeducation.

¶3. Research the option for the Thai Hmong who have parents in Thailand and separate the Hmong who have parents in Laos for reeducation.

¶4. Reeducate them in Bolikhamsai.

¶5. Send them to the Ministry.

Experts recommendation:

¶1. Have higher levels provide additional guidance.

¶2. Propose sending them to the Ministry of Public Security.

¶3. Propose or request funds for subsistence.

(Dated) Paksane, January 19, 2006

Provincial police command

(signed)

Khammanh Saithavisoiuk

Investigation committee

(signed)

Phouvong"

Comment

¶4. (C) As crude as it is, this document is consistent in style with other provincial reports we have seen. The

information it contains is also consistent with what we know of the 22 females deported from Thailand. Finally, details of the interrogation match information provided us in January by a Lao government official familiar with the arrest and detention of the group. We conclude that the document is indeed a copy of the official Bolikhamsai province report of the interrogation of the 22 females.

¶5. (C) The Lao government's paranoia about the children is manifest throughout the document. What we found surprising was the extent to which the children's religious beliefs raised red flags for officials in Bolikhamsai, a province that in recent years has been responsible for a litany of serious cases of religious intolerance. The religious element to Lao suspicions is something we had not previously given much weight to, but it now appears Lao authorities may have genuinely feared that the children were sent here to sow dissent through proselytizing activities.

¶6. (C) We have passed a copy of the document to Embassy Bangkok. It may be useful to pass a copy to UNHCR in Bangkok, and eventually Thai authorities as well. At the least, it should put to rest any doubts the Thai might have that the Lao have not known all along where the children were. End comment.
HASLACH